

SENSE OF THE CONGRESS REGARDING THE OCEAN

SEPTEMBER 23, 1997.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, from the Committee on Resources,
submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. Con. Res. 131]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Resources, to whom was referred the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 131) expressing the sense of Congress regarding the ocean, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with amendments and recommend that the concurrent resolution as amended be agreed to.

The amendments are as follows:

Strike out all after the resolving clause and insert in lieu thereof of the following:

That it is the sense of the Congress that—

(1) the ocean is of paramount importance to the economic future, environment quality, and national security of the United States;

(2) the United States has a responsibility to exercise and promote comprehensive stewardship of the ocean and the living marine resources it contains; and

(3) Federal agencies are encouraged to take advantage of the United States and international focus on the oceans in 1998, to—

(A) review United States oceanography and marine resource management policies and program;

(B) identify opportunities to streamline, better direct, and increase interagency cooperation in oceanographic research and marine resource management policies and programs; and

(C) develop scientific, educational, and resource management programs which will advance the exploration of the ocean and the sustainable use of ocean resources.

Amend the preamble to read as follows:

Whereas the ocean comprises nearly three quarters of the surface of the Earth;

Whereas the ocean contains diverse species of fish and other living organisms which form the largest ecosystem on Earth;

Whereas these living marine resources provide important food resources to the United States and the world, and unsustainable use of resources has unacceptable economic, environmental, and cultural consequences;

Whereas the ocean and sea floor contain vast energy and mineral resources which are critical to the economy of the United States and the world;

Whereas the ocean largely controls global weather and climate, and is the ultimate source of all water resources;

Whereas the vast majority of the deep ocean is unexplored and unknown, and the ocean is truly the last frontier on Earth for science and civilization;

Whereas the ocean is the common means of transportation between coastal nations and carries the majority of the United States foreign trade;

Whereas any nation's use or misuse of ocean resources has effects far beyond that nation's borders;

Whereas it has been 30 years since the Commission on Marine Science, Engineering, and Resources (popularly known as the Stratton Commission) met to examine the state of United States ocean and coastal policy, and issued recommendations which led to the present Federal structure for oceanography and marine resource management; and

Whereas 1998 had been declared the International Year of the Ocean, and in order to observe such celebration, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and other Federal agencies in cooperation with organizations concerned with ocean science and marine resources, have resolved to promote exploration, utilization, conservation, and public awareness of the ocean: Now, therefore, be it

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

The purpose of H. Con. Res. 131 is to express the sense of Congress regarding the ocean.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

The ocean covers nearly three-quarters of the earth's surface. It contains enormous energy, mineral, and fishery resources, carries the vast majority of international commerce, and supports tourism and recreation industries worldwide.

The ocean has vast importance to the United States. The U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone, that portion of the oceans controlled by the U.S., is equal in size to the entire land area of the United States. Fifty-four percent of Americans live in coastal areas. Ninety-eight percent of U.S. exports travel by ship. The average American consumes 15 pounds of seafood annually, and this supports a \$40 billion industry. Offshore oil and gas production supplies 10 percent of U.S. oil consumption and 25 percent of U.S. natural gas consumption. Clearly the ocean is extremely important to the economy, national security, and environmental quality of the United States.

Despite this importance, the ocean remains one of the least understood environments on earth. The surface of the planet Venus has been mapped more accurately than the majority of the ocean floor. For example, within the last several years, scientists exploring the deep ocean have discovered new and bizarre environments populated by strange organisms. Hydrothermal vent communities on the ocean floor contain bacteria and worms that inhabit the most extreme environments on earth, thriving in hot, caustic chemical brines in the complete absence of oxygen.

Our lack of understanding of ocean environments impacts the ability of the U.S. to effectively manage its marine resources. A significant increase in fisheries research and management efforts within the last two decades have improved the health of many fisheries, but some fish stocks continue to decline. These problems can only be addressed through long-term research and a commitment to better management.

However, many Federal ocean programs have suffered from inconsistent support. Funding for oceanographic research has re-

mained nearly constant, while other scientific research funding has increased. Seagoing commerce has tripled in the last fifty years and continues to increase, but Federal funding for nautical mapping and charting has been cut in half over the last 15 years. The Committee feels that the current lack of emphasis on ocean programs within the Federal Government is inconsistent with the importance of the ocean to the U.S. economy and environment.

1998 has been declared the International Year of the Ocean. International organizations including the United Nations, the International Maritime Organization, the International Geophysical Union, are planning a series of conferences, cooperative scientific efforts, and educational events. The objective of the Year of the Ocean is to "focus the attention of the public, governments, and decision-makers worldwide on the importance of the ocean as a resource."

The Committee notes that there is a plethora of U.S. ocean programs, which are located in numerous departments and agencies. In 1969, the Stratton Commission was formed to investigate Federal ocean and coastal activities and recommend methods to streamline and improve these programs. This commission made recommendations which led to significant improvements, including the establishment of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the passage of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972.

The international attention on the oceans in 1998 presents an excellent opportunity to reexamine Federal ocean programs, evaluate the long-term effectiveness of the Stratton Commission's recommendations, and strive to improve Federal ocean programs. The Committee strongly encourages Federal agencies to take advantage of this opportunity to improve interagency and international cooperation, take part in global scientific initiatives, and enhance marine resource management throughout the United States.

H. Con. Res. 131 has two purposes. First, it expresses the sense of Congress that understanding of the oceans and marine resources is critical to the economy, environmental quality, and national security of the United States. Second, it encourages the Administration to take advantage of the international focus on the ocean in 1998 to examine U.S. ocean programs and take substantive actions to improve the understanding and use of marine resources.

COMMITTEE ACTION

H. Con. Res. 131 was introduced on July 29, 1997, by Congressman Jim Saxton (R-NJ), Chairman, Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife, and Oceans, and Congressman Neil Abercrombie (D-HI), Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife, and Oceans. The bill was referred to the Committee on Resources, and within the Committee to the Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife, and Oceans. On September 11, 1997, the Subcommittee met to mark up H. Con. Res. 131. Mr. Saxton offered an amendment to encourage the Administration to take advantage of the Year of the Ocean to enhance U.S. ocean programs. The amendment was adopted by voice vote. The bill was then ordered favorably reported to the Full Committee by voice vote. On September 17, 1997, the full Resources Commit-

tee met to consider H. Con. Res. 131. No new amendments were offered, and the bill, as amended, was then ordered favorably reported to the House of Representatives by voice vote.

COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With respect to the requirements of clause 2(1)(3) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, and clause 2(b)(1) for rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Resources' oversight findings and recommendations are reflected in the body of this report.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Article I, section 8 of the Constitution of the United States grants Congress the authority to enact H. Con. Res. 131.

COST OF THE LEGISLATION

Clause 7(a) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives requires an estimate and a comparison by the Committee of the costs which would be incurred in carrying out H. Con. Res. 131. However, clause 7(d) of that rule provides that this requirement does not apply when the Committee has included in its report a timely submitted cost estimate of the bill prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office under section 403 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

COMPLIANCE WITH HOUSE RULE XI

1. With respect to the requirement of clause 2(1)(3)(B) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives and section 308(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, H. Con. Res. 131 does not contain any new budget authority, spending authority, credit authority, or an increase or decrease in revenues or tax expenditures.

2. With respect to the requirement of clause 2(1)(3)(D) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee has received no report of oversight findings and recommendations from the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight on the subject of H. Con. Res. 131.

3. With respect to the requirement of clause 2(1)(3)(C) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives and section 403 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Committee has received the following cost estimate for H. Con. Res. 131 from the Director of the Congressional Budget Office.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, September 18, 1997.

Hon. DON YOUNG,
Chairman, Committee on Resources,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has reviewed H. Con. Res. 131, a concurrent resolution expressing the

sense of the Congress regarding the ocean, as ordered reported by the Committee on Resources on September 17, 1997.

CBO estimates that adopting this resolution would have no effect on the federal budget. H. Con. Res. 131 would express the sense of the Congress that (1) the ocean is of paramount importance to the economic future, environmental quality, and national security of the United States; (2) the United States has a responsibility to exercise and promote comprehensive stewardship of the ocean and the living marine resources it contains; and (3) federal agencies are encouraged to examine and improve United States ocean programs and to advance the exploration of the ocean and the appropriate use of ocean resources.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Gary Brown. This estimate was approved by Robert A. Sunshine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

Sincerely,

JAMES L. BLUM,
(For June E. O'Neill, Director).

COMPLIANCE WITH PUBLIC LAW 104-4

H. Con. Res. 131 contains no unfunded mandates.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

If enacted, H. Con. Res. 131 would make no changes in existing law.